

The Brethren Evangelist,

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THE OLD AND THE NEW.

A year ago 1893 was new and bright; now it is old and worn out. A year ago in its breast were concealed unfathomable mysteries. Now all has passed under the illuminating rays of the present. What was then undiscoverable is now manifest; what the wisest could not then discern is now known by "wayfaring men though fools."

What a picture the passing years are of life. A short time ago we were born. That is the spring time of life. Then comes the season of development. This is the May and June of life. At this age the world seems wonderfully fragrant, beautiful and promising. Swiftly following these early summer months of schooling and cultivation, comes the Autumn of business, new family relations—largely dependent in results upon the Spring and Summer of life. This is the season of life when we manifest whether the seed planted was good and whether we kept the weeds, sinful, injurious and expensive habits out.

From the departed year has come both joy and sorrow. To some of us it has brought blessings incomparable with anything past or future in this life. To others it has been a year of sleepless nights and scalding tears.

It is a custom in all well regulated business houses to take an account of stock at least once a year. Shall it be true of us that the children of this world are wiser in the affairs of this life than we are in the things of eternity? Is it true of us that Tyre and Sidon would surpass us had they our opportunities? Must we blush in shame at the mention of the names of the queen of Sheba and Rahab when the little we do with all the advantages of this boasted century of intellect and moral progress is compared with what they did in the dark night of cruelty and ignorance?

From whence have we come and where and how do we stand as a church? Originally the majority of us came by relation

from an organization which we were wont to call "the church." At that time the membership in general was clear and firm on all matters of faith, duty, and religious jurisprudence. But in some localities we have baptized more than we have made "Brethren," according to the meaning which we understood that term to have when we designated the church by it. We have more sympathy now than formerly for some of the young brethren who lived where the faith of the brethren was obscured by false teaching, and its doctrine slighted by unfaithful shepherds. Their motives for an authoritative answer as to what is the bond of union in the Brethren Church appears to us in a new light now. They had heard the "lo here and lo there" by those who posed as teachers, until in humiliation they had to confess they knew not what the faith, doctrine and government of the church is, and they besought conference to answer them. Those of us who knew nothing of these difficulties, who lived where assent to the Gospel faith and the practice of the ordinances as delivered unto us was universal, could see no propriety in asking such questions, and regarded with no little suspicion those who first pressed them.

Hitherto we have hesitated in speaking for the church on these fundamental and most vital points because of our recent identification with you. Now, however, we feel that we have gained a residence among you, and shall venture to speak more directly and positively. We feel not to do so would be acting disloyal to the worthy ministers who have twice elected us to be their president, and the National Conference that has twice elected us editor of its church organ.

"Looking backward" we see very clearly the causes which brought the Brethren church into existence. We were part of a church that boasted of taking the New Testament as its creed, confession of faith, or discipline. Its ministers exhorted us to compare their teaching with the "Word of God," and to accept only what was supported thereby.

The acceptance of the New Testament as our creed, and the application of the rule to compare the words of the minister therewith, led us also to do the same with the acts of councils, both local and national. This exposed the fact that there was no Gospel, direct or indirect, teaching that men and women must dress and comb their hair after certain styles dictated by the church, that there was no Gospel, direct or indirect, against Christians availing themselves of every auxiliary of moral influence, e. g., such as prayer meetings, Sunday-schools, Sunday-school conventions, ministerial institutes, instrumental music. Yet the church

in many localities would no more tolerate these than it would larceny. In the administration of government the local church could do absolutely nothing but what could be appealed to a general conference; and the decision of this general conference could be enforced even though the local church should unanimously oppose all. All this was done without any authority whatever from the standard to which we were boastfully pointed for spiritual guidance?

The bond of union of the Brethren church then was;

1. *Faith* in Jesus as the Christ, the promised Messiah, the seed that should bruise the serpent's head, and that God had raised him from the dead.
2. *Repentance* from all sin, lust and works of the flesh, and the presentation of the body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.
3. *Public Confession* of Jesus as the Christ, the son of the living God, the resurrected Savior;
4. *A Vow* to accept the Revised New Testament as the sole rule of faith and practice—to study and obey it;
5. *Baptism* as the institution by which we take on the Lord Jesus Christ, his government and his promises;
6. *Trine Immersion* as the one and only authorized mode of Christian baptism;
7. That the *communion* which Christ instituted should be taken in the evening of the day, and that it consists:
 - (a) In washing one another's feet ceremonially;
 - (b) In eating a supper;
 - (c) In eating bread and drinking of the fruit of the vine as emblematic of the Lord's broken body and shed blood;
8. *Anointing* the sick with oil in the name of the Lord and praying over them;
9. Opposition to war and blood-shed regardless of cause or provocation;
10. Opposition to oath bound secret orders.
11. Opposition to testifying in court, or acknowledging any legal papers by any thing more than an *affirmation*;
12. That the Christian's greeting is a salutation with a holy kiss;
13. That a local church is complete within itself, and is the highest court of appeal in all matters of government and discipline;
14. That the *officers* of a church are evangelists, elders and deacons, to be elected by the churches in which they reside;
15. That those who minister in word and doctrine shall be provided by those whom they serve with their temporal necessities.

While the foregoing is believed to be essentially correct, it is not absolutely so, and may not be even as nearly so as others could